

To: Chair Nathan Manning, Vice-Chair, Ranking Member, and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

From: Dave Ryan, Sylvania, Ohio

Date: November 3, 2025

Subject: Opposition to SB 174 — “Allocation of Parenting Responsibilities”

Dear Chairman Manning and Members of the Committee:

I write today to urge you to **oppose SB 174**, which seeks to overhaul and replace large swaths of the law governing parenting plans, parenting time, and custody-related issues in Ohio. Because of the far-reaching changes proposed, this legislation raises serious concerns about fairness, clarity, unintended consequences, and the rights of parents and children.

Summary of the Bill

As you know, SB 174 proposes to amend numerous sections of the Ohio Revised Code pertaining to allocation of parenting responsibilities. It replaces terminology such as “parental rights and responsibilities,” “shared parenting,” “sole custody,” and “parenting time” with new language (e.g., “parenting responsibilities,” “companionship”) and a new “parenting plan” framework. Supporters say it modernizes the law and focuses solely on children’s best interests.

Grounds for Opposition

While I appreciate the aim of improving child-centred outcomes, I believe SB 174 carries risk of unintended harm. My concerns include:

1. Lack of clarity and certainty for parents.

The law’s sweeping revisions mean that terms which parents, attorneys, and judges have relied on for decades would be changed or eliminated. Commonly understood concepts such as “shared parenting” and “sole custody” may no longer apply in the same way. This ambiguity may lead to increased litigation, confusion, inconsistent application by courts, and greater cost for families.

2. Potential reduction in predictability of parenting time and rights.

The bill emphasizes “parenting responsibilities” in a way that appears to give courts broader discretion to allocate time or restrict access based on new or undefined criteria. With greater judicial discretion comes greater risk of subjective decisions, which may disadvantage one parent inadvertently, especially non-custodial parents, and ultimately disrupt stable relationships children rely upon.

3. Impact on the parent-child relationship.

If one parent is unfairly limited or discouraged in their time or decision-making role, children may suffer reduced access to meaningful relationships with both parents. While the bill states the goal is to “foster and continue the relationship between the child and each parent,” critics note that in effect the framework may move away from equal access. A meaningful parent-child relationship with both parents is often crucial to a child’s well-being, and legislation should safeguard that rather than jeopardize it.

4. Domestic-violence and safety concerns.

Though the bill makes certain provisions for restricting parenting responsibilities when abuse or danger is shown, the standard (“preponderance of evidence”) and the process for proving “emotional abuse” or risk of harm may still leave victims vulnerable or lead to inconsistent protections. We need clarity, due process protections, and assurance that courts have the tools to protect children and abused parents—not a system that increases litigation or confusion.

5. Implementation burden and cost.

Rewriting so many statutory sections (as SB 174 proposes) will require extensive retraining of judges, magistrates, court staff, attorneys, and social-service providers. It may impose considerable

administrative cost, and transitional confusion may lead to delays that harm families in crisis.

Conclusion

While the goals of SB 174—to modernize Ohio’s parenting laws and prioritize children’s best interests—are laudable, the bill in its current form introduces too many uncertainties and risks. I urge you to **vote no** on SB 174 or delay consideration until substantial concerns regarding clarity, fairness, and child safety are addressed.

Thank you for your time and for your work on behalf of Ohio’s families.

Sincerely,

Dave Ryan

Sylvania, Ohio